

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTO DOMINGO 1867

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PMIL, PINR, DR
SUBJECT: DOMINICAN MILITARY ATTITUDES TOWARD PRD

1. ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES, SOME RANKING OFFICERS OF THE ARMED FORCES HAVE BEEN SAYING PRIVATELY THAT IF PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DOMINICAN (PRD) WERE TO WIN THE PRESIDENCY IN MAY 16 ELECTION, THERE WOULD BE MILITARY INTERVENTION TO PREVENT PRD FROM GOVERNING COUNTRY.

2. THIS KIND OF SPECULATION MAY HAVE FIGURED IN ANNOUNCEMENT BY PRD SECGEN PENA GOMEZ (SD 1806) THAT HE WOULD STAND DOWN FROM LEADERSHIP ROLE AFTER PRD PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL WINNERS ARE INSTALLED IN OFFICE. PENA HAS LONG BEEN BETE NOIRE OF DOMINICAN MILITARY, MOST OF WHOM FEAR AND SOME EVEN HATE HIM; THEY SEE PENA AS DOMINATING THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, AS WELL AS THE PARTY, AND THEY BELIEVE HE WOULD, IF THE PRD WON THE ELECTION NEXT MONTH, GAIN EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY AFTER THE AUGUST 16 PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION.

3. IT IS THEREFORE NOT SURPRISING TO RECEIVE REPORTS THAT SENIOR MILITARY PERSONALITIES, WATCHING PRD'S CAMPAIGN UNFOLD MORE OR LESS SMOOTHLY WHILE CONSIDERABLE TURMOIL CONTINUES WITHIN BALAGUER'S REFORMISTA PARTY, ARE THINKING ALOUD ABOUT POSSIBILITIES OF AN ELECTORAL UPSET. CLEARLY, THEY ARE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT WHAT
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THIS WOULD PORTEND FOR THEM INDIVIDUALLY AND FOR THE ARMED FORCES.

4. AT THIS TIME, HOWEVER, IT SEEMS VERY IMPROBABLE THAT WELL-KNOWN DIVISIONS WITHIN DOMINICAN MILITARY HIERARCHY COULD BE OVERCOME SUFFICIENTLY TO PERMIT EFFECTIVE CONSPIRATORIAL ACTION TO PREVENT, BY FORCE MAJEURE BEFORE OR AFTER ELECTION, PRD FROM COMING TO POWER. IN ANY CASE, WE HAVE NO INDICATION TO DATE THAT

THE TWO RIVAL FACTIONS WITHIN DOMINICAN MILITARY ARE COORDINATING ANYTHING THAT COULD BE CONSTRUED AS OPERATIONAL PLANS TO THIS END, NOR IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE THAT ANY GROUP IS MOBILIZING FOR A POSSIBLE COUP ACTION IF PRD WINS THE ELECTION.

5. THERE IS ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY, OF COURSE, THAT FACTIONS MIGHT DECIDE TO MOUNT SOME EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL EFFORT INDEPENDENTLY OF ONE ANOTHER OR IN PARALLEL TO THWART AN ELECTORAL DECISION IN FAVOR OF THE PRD. AT THIS JUNCTURE, HOWEVER, THERE IS GENERAL CONSENSUS ON THE PUBLIC RECORD STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF RESPECTING THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. IT WOULD THUS BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR A MILITARY GROUP TO FIND A PLAUSIBLE PRETEXT FOR TAKING EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL ACTION TO FRUSTRATE THE POPULAR WILL. FOLLOWING THE LEAD TAKEN BY PRESIDENT BALAGUER, STATEMENTS BY THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMED FORCES AND OTHER RANKING MILITARY HAVE EMPHASIZED THE INTENT OF THE MILITARY TO AVOID PARTISAN INTERVENTION AND RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF CONTENDING CANDIDATES. PRESIDENT BALAGUER HIMSELF, THE ONE FIGURE WHO RETAINS THE LOYALTY OF ALL FACTIONS OF THE ARMED FORCES, HAS URGED, BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, THAT ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN BE CONDUCTED IN ATMOSPHERE OF CIVILITY AND MUTUAL RESPECT. HE RECENTLY TOLD AMBASSADOR HURWITZ HE WOULD BE FIRST TO SEND CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO A VICTORIOUS OPPOSITION. AND IN APRIL 7 CAMPAIGN SPEECH HE AFFIRMED HE WOULD WIN ELECTION "CON VOTAS NO CON BOTAS" ("WITH VOTES NOT BOOTS").

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6. NEVERTHELESS, A CHANGE IN ATMOSPHERE AND CONDITIONS AND RECKLESS ACTIONS REMAIN POSSIBILITIES, HOWEVER UNREALISTIC THEY MAY APPEAR AT THIS JUNCTURE, AND WE SHALL REMAIN ALERT TO ANY INDICATIONS THAT THEY ARE TAKING MORE THAN SPECULATIVE FORM. DOMINICANS ARE WELL AWARE OF PRIMARY US CONCERN THAT ELECTIONS BE FREE AND FAIR, OF US NEUTRALITY AMONG CONTENDERS AND OF US INTENT TO MAINTAIN CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RESULTING ELECTED GOVERNMENT. FOR BENEFIT OF MILITARY AND THEIR CIVILIAN ASSOCIATES WHO MAY HAVE IDEAS OF CARRYING FURTHER MUSINGS RE EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL

ACTION THAT MIGHT BE TAKEN TO FRUSTRATE AN OPPOSITION VICTORY- PERHAPS IN BELIEF US WOULD IN THE END CONDONE SUCH ACTION--MISSION OFFICERS HAVE TAKEN OPPORTUNITIES, AS ELECTIONS APPROACH, TO MAKE CLEAR THAT US IS GENUINELY CONCERNED THAT DEMOCRATIC PROCESS BE RESPECTED.

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7. SUCH MESSAGE WAS CONVEYED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO CERTAIN MILITARY AND POLITICAL FIGURES AT AMBASSADOR HURWITCH'S MARCH 31 FAREWELL RECEPTION AND AT RECEPTION OFFERED BY SECRETARY OF ARMED FORCES ON APRIL 6 FOR VISITING MEMBERS OF INTER-AMERICAN DEFENSE COLLEGE AS WELL AS IN OTHER RECENT CONTACTS. IN CONVERSATION ON SUBJECT AT RECEPTION FOR LADC, ARMED FORCES SECRETARY BEAUCHAMP ASSURED CHARGE THAT HE WAS MAINTAINING NON-PARTISAN STANCE OF MILITARY FORCES, DESPITE PROVOCATIVE STATEMENTS OF PRD SECGEN PENA GOMEZ. IN CONVERSATION APRIL 3, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, VICE ADMIRAL JIMENEZ, OPINED TO DCM THAT HE EXPECTED BALAGUER TO WIN BUT IN THE EVENT OF PRD TRIUMPH, MILITARY WOULD ACCEPT RESULTS, THOUGH TROUBLE WOULD BREW IF THEREAFTER THE PRD GOVERNMENT SOUGHT TO MAKE ADICAL CHANGES IN ARMED FORCES. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE NEW PRESIDENT WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO DESIGNATE THE ARMED FORCES SECRETARY OF HIS CHOICE, BUT, HE ASSERTED, THERE WOULD BE RESISTANCE IF, FOR INSTANCE, THE PRD PRESIDENT APPOINTED ONE OF THE PARTY'S POLITICOS AS A GENERAL.

8. IN CONVERSATIONS ON THE ELECTIONS WITH IMPORTANT MILITARY

AND POLITICAL FIGURES, SENIOR MISSION OFFICERS ARE MAKING FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. THE USG FAVORS NO PARTY OR CANDIDATE.

B. WE HAVE SAID PUBLICLY ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS THAT WE EXPECT
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TO MAINTAIN OUR TRADITIONAL CORDIAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS WITH WHATEVER CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT TAKES POWER NEXT AUGUST.

C. WE NOTE THAT THE PRESENT ELECTORAL CLIMATE HAS REMAINED CALM AND THAT A SPIRIT OF MUTUAL RESPECT AND CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE AMONG THE CONTENDING CANDIDATES HAS EMERGED.

D. THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH PUBLIC DECLARATIONS BY PRESIDENT BALAGUER THAT THE ELECTIONS WILL BE CLEAN AND FREE. IT IS CONSISTENT ALSO WITH DECLARATIONS BY THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMED FORCES AND OTHER SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS THAT THE ARMED FORCES AND POLICE WILL BE COMPLETELY NEUTRAL IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND WILL RESPECT THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS.

E. EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL OR ILLEGAL ACTIONS TO FRUSTRATE FREE ELECTIONS AND THEIR RESULTS SEEM IMPLAUSIBLE UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, BUT ANY SUCH MOVES THAT MIGHT BE MADE WOULD PROVOKE A STRONGLY NEGATIVE REACTION FROM WASHINGTON. AXELROD

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